

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 0315

FOR A/MRS HESS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP

SUBJECT: VISIT TO ROK OF SENATOR J. BENNETT JOHNSTON

REF: (A) STATE 297350 (B) SEOUL 9904

SUMMARY: DURING JANUARY 9-11 STAY IN ROK, SENATOR JOHNSTON CALLED ON PRESIDENT PARK CHUNG-HEE AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEAKER CHONG IL-KWON, HAD DETAILED DISCUSSIONS WITH AMBASSADOR SNEIDER, GENERAL STILWELL AND SENIOR MISSION OFFICERS, WAS GUEST OF HONOR AT REPRESENTATIVE DINNERS HOSTED BY AMBASSADOR AND SPEAKER, AND VISITED DMZ AREA. END SUMMARY.

1. SOON AFTER JANUARY 9 AFTERNOON ARRIVAL AT SEOUL, SENATOR SPENT TWO HOURS IN PROBING AND PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE WITH AMBASSADOR, DCM, POLITICAL/ECONOMIC/PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNSELORS, CHIEF JUSMAG, AND SPECIAL ASSISTANT. DISCUSSION INCLUDED STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF REPUBLIC, REVIEW OF RELATIVE SOUTH AND NORTH KOREAN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES, MILITARY FORCE STRUCTURES, SIGNIFICANCE OF U.S. COMMITMENT AS STABILIZING DETERRENT, ROLE OF PRESIDENT PARK, AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. IN EVENING, AMBASSADOR HOSTED DINNER FOR SENATOR, WHICH AFFORDED OPPORTUNITY FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH ROKG CABINET MINISTERS, CHAIRMAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, MOFA ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, AND OTHERS.

2. ON MORNING JANUARY 10, SENATOR CALLED ON GENERAL STILWELL, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEAKER CHONG IL-KWON, AND PRESIDENT PARK

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CHUNG-HEE. GENERAL STILWELL MADE COMPREHENSIVE PRESENTATION OVER-

ALL MILITARY SITUATION, WHICH SENATOR FOUND VALUABLE AND IMPRESSIVE. DURING CALL ON SPEAKER CHONG AND TOUR THROUGH NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING, SPEAKER TRIED TO BUILD UP IMPORTANCE AND DEMOCRATIC NATURE OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, URGED IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR KOREA, AND IN JOCKULAR TONE INVEIGHED AGAINST IMPORT OF U.S. WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT INTO MALE-DOMINATED KOREAN SOCIETY. SENATOR WAS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF CONVERSATION WITH CHONG AFTERWARDS, SAYING KOREAN LEADERS WOULD DO BETTER TO BRIEF VISITORS ON ROK'S MERITS (E.G. ECONOMICS) THAN TO TRY TO CONVINCE THEM THAT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WAS ANYTHING MORE THAN HOLLOW SHELL.

3. AMBASSADOR ACCOMPANIED SENATOR TO BLUE HOUSE IN LATE MORNING. JOHNSTON COMPLIMENTED PRESIDENT ON KOREAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND GAVE FULL RECOGNITION TO ROK SECURITY PROBLEMS. HE POINTED OUT TO PRESIDENT AT SAME TIME THAT THERE WAS SENTIMENT IN SENATE FOR FURTHER PROGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND URGED MOVEMENT IN THIS DIRECTION IN ORDER TO HELP KOREA'S FRIENDS IN CONGRESS. PRESIDENT PARK EXPLAINED ROK PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS ABOUT NORTH KOREAN THREAT. HE EXPRESSED PARTICULAR CONCERN ABOUT NORTH KOREA EXPLOITING AMERICAN ELECTIONS THIS YEAR, PERHAPS BY INITIATING AN INCIDENT. HE TOOK NOTE OF JOHNSTON'S REMARKS ON HUMAN RIGHTS WITH SOME UNDERSTANDING.

4. THROUGHOUT HIS OTHER CONVERSATIONS WITH BOTH AMERICANS AND KOREANS SENATOR MOSTLY LISTENED, BUT MADE TWO POINTS CLEAR: (1) THAT HE FULLY SUPPORTED NEED FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE AND U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN KOREA; AND (2) THAT FEELING IN THE CONGRESS REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS IN KOREA WAS A PROBLEM.

5. AT NOON JANUARY 10, SENATOR LEFT BY HELICOPTER FOR EXTENDED TOUR OF, AND BRIEFINGS AT, JOINT SECURITY (DMZ) AREA. HE NOTED THAT ACTUAL OVERVIEW OF TERRAIN INVOLVED WAS VERY USEFUL SUPPLEMENT TO STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL TALKS HE HAD HAD. DURING EVENING, SPEAKER CHONG IL-KWON HOSTED DINNER FOR SENATOR AT POPULAR KOREAN RESTAURANT IN SEOUL.

6. SENATOR DEPARTED ROK ON SCHEDULE MORNING JANUARY 11, WITH BRIEF STOPOVER PLANNED TOKYO ENROUTE WASHINGTON.

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